

# Afghanistan **Freedom**

October 24, 2005

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

## Watch



**325th Air Assaults  
into Mianashin**

**Page 8**





**Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice greets Army Command Sgt. Maj. Cynthia Pritchett, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, at the U.S. Embassy after her arrival in Afghanistan Oct. 12.**

Photo by Army 2nd Lt. Carmen Nicely, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Page 3: Improving the lines of communication

Page 4: A-10s solidify Coalition in Afghanistan

Page 5: Phase doc keeps A-10s airborne

Page 6: 'Tarnak Farms'

Page 8: Air Assault ►

Page 12: Donation improves Sharan hospital lab

Page 14: Around the services

Page 15: "Helping out" ►

**Cover: Army Sgt. Marcus Wagner (left) and Army Pvt. Ramiro Castro of A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, make their way up a hillside while out on patrol near Gardeneh, Afghanistan, Oct. 2.**

Photo by Army Spc. Mike Pryor, Task Force Red Falcon



## Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

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Army Capt. John J. Pritchard, 173rd Airborne Brigade's assistant Judge Advocate General, passes out clothes, toys and dental products and school supplies to the children of Panjwyi Village in Kandahar Province.

# One lawyer makes a difference

**By Army Sgt. 1st Class  
Stephen M. Lum  
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

**KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,  
Afghanistan** - How many lawyers does it take to make a difference?

Here in Kandahar, it only takes one.

Army Capt. John J. Pritchard, from Canal Winchester, Ohio, is here to make a difference for not only the Soldiers deployed to Kandahar, but also to the people of Afghanistan.

Pritchard, the 173rd Airborne Brigade's assistant Judge Advocate General, is presently assigned to the Kandahar Airfield Base Operations office. He works with a staff of five paralegals to provide legal assistance to the Soldiers of Regional Command-South. He also acts as the attorney for the KAF Base Operations commander.

"I just want to serve the Soldiers of RC South," said Pritchard, a former National Guard infantryman. "Whether it is a commander needing advice concerning the

legal impact of a command decision, or a Soldier needing a personal legal issue addressed, my goal is to provide accurate legal counsel so the commander or Soldier can focus on their primary mission. That gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction."

On the legal side, Pritchard said he attended a shura (meeting) with Gen. Muslim Amed, Afghan National Army's 205th Corps commander, and local property owners who were concerned about a new boundary fence being built on their property. That meeting led to another one with the local keeper of property records who determined that no private property would be taken.

After the meeting, he took the opportunity to distribute toys and school supplies sent from family and friends back in Ohio. He handed out toy cars, soccer balls, and school supplies donated from the Groveport United Methodist Church, and an American Legion post.

"It wasn't the first nor will it be the last time I'll be distributing gifts from home,"

said Pritchard, who was a paralegal before he passed the Ohio bar and received a direct commission. "Included in my stash of giveaways were dental supplies from my dentist, Dr. Robert Sotck, and his wife, Lisa, along with an assortment of clothes and toys from my 9-year-old son, Jason."

During one of the village medical outreach visits in September, Pritchard was given an opportunity to present his goodies. With the help of some adult volunteers, he was able to pass out several of the 100 soccer balls he got from his church and American Legion post. Although his son claimed that he didn't have any money to give, he was glad to donate his outgrown, but not out-worn, clothes.

"I hope to leave a positive impression with the future of Afghanistan; especially the children," said Pritchard, who lives in Vicenza, Italy, with his family. "I hope they will remember the Soldier who gave them a toy or soccer ball when they grow up and know that the United States helped make Afghanistan a better place for them."

# A-10s solidify force in Afghanistan

By Air Force Capt.

**James H. Cunningham**

**455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - Eleven members of the French Army got a rare opportunity to get an up-close look at an A-10 Thunderbolt II from the 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron here Oct. 7.

For the 10 French officers, who are assigned to Task Force Phoenix in Kabul and responsible for training Afghan National Army officers, the visit provided a critical link between training and operations.

"We train Afghan National Army officers, so it's important to know the operational side of the mission here in Afghanistan," said French Army Maj. Arnaud Cervera, liaison officer for the French operational training unit to Task Force Phoenix. "It helps us do our job better."

For others, the visit confirmed what they already knew about working with the Coalition.

"I'm impressed with how everyone here works together toward an objective," said French Army Lt. Col. Olivier Fort, 35th Parachute Artillery Regiment, and Combined Joint Task Force-76 French liaison officer to CJTF-76. "Even for a group of 10, it's always a combined effort. It's very impressive."



Photo by Air Force Capt. James H. Cunningham

**Air Force Capt. Jim Roy, (2nd from right) 354th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron pilot, jokes with French Army officers during a recent tour.**

A-10s from the 354th EFS flew 500 combat sorties in September alone, including 380 direct close-air support missions.

"It is always valuable for A-10 pilots to meet allied ground forces and explain our capabilities and tactics," said Air Force Capt. Jim Roy, A-10 pilot with the 354th EFS. "The allies were able to learn more about our tactics and how we will support them in a close-air support environment."

It's the type of role infantry officers can relate to.

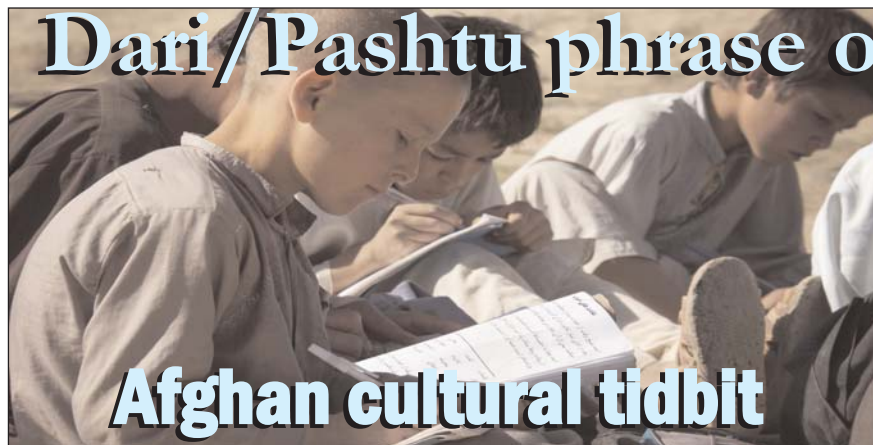
"You can feel the power standing here with the munitions and guns," said Cervera. "As infantry, you know you will do a good job with a plane like this overhead."

"It's absolutely impressive and very original," Fort said. "I think we will all remember this."

"This visit was a real treat. I enjoyed the opportunity to strengthen the bond with our French Coalition partners" said Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Danigole, Deputy Commander, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group.

"These small exchanges help develop relationships that enable us to work together more effectively."

## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



### Afghan cultural tidbit

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

**How much of the Quran have you read?**

**Dari**

Taaknoon chand pari Quran Ra shoma Talawad Karda ya?

Ta-ak-noon ch-and pari Quran Ra sho-ma Talawad Kar-da ya

**Pashtu**

Taso sona Quran sharif Tala wad Kalydai kai?

Ta-so so-na Quran sha-rif Ta-la wad Ka-ly-dai kai

During Ramadan, special prayer services are held each night at all the local Mosques. One-thirtieth of the Quran is read each day so as to finish the entire book by the end of Ramadan. According to Islamic religion, at sundown, the Prophet Mohammed broke his fast with dates and water. The fast can be broken with any food not prohibited by Islamic laws. Following this meal is the Sunset Prayer (Maghrab). This is performed before the After meal, which is a full course meal.



# Phase doc keeps OEF A-10s airborne

**By Air Force Staff Sgt.  
Marcus McDonald**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - A-10 "Warthogs" flew 500 sorties last month over the skies of Afghanistan in support of the Operation Enduring Freedom. Direct close-air support missions accounted for 380 of those sorties.

Whether supporting ground troops in the war or conducting a training mission at their home station, A-10 pilots know where to park their planes after collecting a set number of frequent-flyer miles.

Once an aircraft reaches 400 flying hours, phase doc maintainers deployed here from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., conduct a full inspection to ensure it's ready for the fight.

"We start by de-paneling the aircraft and inspecting vital components such as the engine, landing gear and flight controls," said Air Force Master Sgt. Michael Walker, the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's A-10 phase flight chief.

"From there, we repair or replace any worn or unusable parts to ensure they continue flying."

Support from A-10 back shops proves vital to accomplishing phased maintenance on the A-10, Walker explained.

"From electricians and survival equipment specialists to sheet metal and armament technicians, we always come together as a team to get the job done," he said.

"It takes a lot of teamwork from everyone involved in phase maintenance to keep this Warthog in the fight."

Air Force Lt. Col. Francis McDonough, 354th



Photo by Air Force Capt. James H. Cunningham, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**Air Force Tech. Sgt. Khristian Kirchhofer, an armament specialist with 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, inspects an A-10 30 mm Gatling gun during a recent phase inspection.**

Expeditionary Fighter Squadron director of operations for the "Bulldogs", gave the phase doc professionals high accolades.

"Since their arrival at Bagram, the team has really been working hard to get our

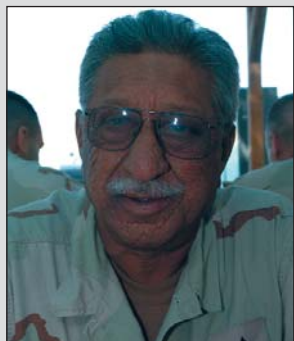
A-10s back into the fight," said McDonough, a native of Orono, Maine.

"Without them here, we would have to fly the airplanes to an interim location like Spangdahlem (Air Base,

**See Phase, page 13**

## Enduring Voices

**What would you do personally to help Pakistan earthquake relief?**



**Shaukat W. Ali, USACE and USAID,**

*"Being born in Pakistan, I know the language and customs. I would work as a liaison with the military and help break down barriers with the people. I've spent 20 years of my career on foreign soil and this is the first major disaster I'm close to."*



**Air Force Master Sgt. Mark Weber, Defense Supply Center Philadelphia-Europe,**

*"I would be able to help people in the food (and) lodging area: set up a dining facility and logistics to get the food in, set up tents and prepare cots."*



**Italian Army 1st Lt. Roberto Lozzi, Italian Media Combat Team,**

*"I would get pictures of units on the ground, helping them and showing (NATO, ISAF, Coalition) commitment to helping the country."*




**Army Sgt. LaKisha Hale, 413th Adjunct General Postal, Det. 2,**

*"Everybody's going to be bringing food and water. I'd organize festivals to bring their morale up; if you still have happiness or joy, that gives you hope."*



# Tarnak Farms



Army Sgt. Sean Oeder, left, a military dog handler with the 67th Mine Dog Detachment and a Lebanon, Ore., native, and Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Ford, an operations noncommissioned officer with A Company, 391st Engineer Battalion, and a native of Asheville, N.C., examine a crater in the ruins of a bombed-out building outside the Tarnak Farms terrorist training site.

## **By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco** **20th Public Affairs Detachment**

### **KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,**

**Afghanistan** - The compound within the 10-foot tall mud walls resembles a basic training-meets-OK Corral ghost town.

Barbed wire is snarled around posts low to the dirt. A concrete tunnel keeps vermin out of the sun. Small ramps and stairs to nowhere stand like monoliths.

This place is known as Tarnak Farms, a deserted al Qaeda training outpost, just outside Kandahar Airfield, that was bombed at the beginning of the global war on terror.

If the site appears familiar to some, it should be. Released al Qaeda training videos featured anti-Coalition militia training there. It was the third largest al Qaeda training center in Afghanistan, next to Tora Bora in Nangrahar Province and Zaewara in Paktia Province.

"When I got here, I did a little research and discovered that Tarnak Farms was the headquarters for al Qaeda and could possibly even be where al Qaeda got its name," said Army Sgt. 1st Class Todd Hutchings, a Du Pont, Wash., native. "It means 'the base.'" The area surrounding Tarnak Farms has since been converted into a firing range. Hutchings, a force protection noncommissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade, has been to the site numerous times in support of range operations.

According to Afghan National Army Brig. Gen. Mohammad Yosuf, a deputy garrison commander in Kandahar, the story of this dusty base began about 45 years ago, when a canal from the Tarnak River brought water and farming to the area.

When Soviet forces came in 1979, the site was turned into the housing and training station for the 3rd Afghan Division and a base for the communist regime.

In 1989, after fighting the Afghan resistance, or mujahiddin, the Soviets withdrew and the fate of the country fell into the hands of militiamen.

In 1992, after the fall of Dr. Najibullah Ahmadzai, one of the last presidents of Afghanistan during the period of the

communist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Tarnak Farms and the 3rd Div. fell into mujahiddin control, said Yosuf.

Khan Agha assumed command of the site and the division, and another mujahiddin commander, Haji Ahmad, took over the airfield. The Afghan Infantry Division 7, another mujahiddin unit, came from Ghazni to occupy the nearby Soviet barracks.

By 1994, the mujahiddin had come into great power through civil war.

Afghanistan was carved up among various factions, with many mujahiddin commanders establishing themselves as virtual warlords. The citizens of Kandahar City lived in fear of murder, rape, looting and extortion, said Yosuf.

A dozen former mujahiddin soldiers and refugees in Pakistan took up arms to liberate Kandahar from anarchy. Most of them were religious students who earned the title, "Talib" through study.

These liberators of Kandahar became known as the Taliban, meaning "students" or "seekers of knowledge." The Taliban were soon supported by Osama bin Laden as part of the al Qaeda terror network.

In 1994, al Qaeda moved into the Soviet barracks and Tarnak Farms, and used the compound as a training area for soldiers. The neighboring airfield became a Taliban operations base.

During the al Qaeda occupation of Tarnak Farms, interaction was strict; no civilians or even Taliban fighters were allowed near the facility.

Many believe that the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were planned and rehearsed at Tarnak Farms. According to Yosuf, the site was only one of many camps bin Laden frequently visited over the six years before the attacks to coordinate his personal plan.

After the August 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, President Bill Clinton ordered cruise missile attacks against suspected terrorist training camps. Bin Laden survived the attacks and continued to hide out in the country.

He probably did not stay in one place for two nights, said Yosuf, and stayed in a

province for only five days at a time.

Bombing raids and ground troops drove the anti-Coalition militia out of the area by Dec. 7, 2001. Tarnak Farms was deserted, and the building on the airfield known as Taliban's Last Stand earned its name.

About 2,000 fighters led by ANA Gen. Gul Agha Sherzai were part of the ground offensive, with team of about 30 Coalition special forces troops coordinating close-air support.

An estimated 450 fighters were in the area during the bombing raids. Nearly 200 insurgents were killed or arrested by the Coalition along the highway outside of the airfield alone.

When the new Afghan government formed, Infantry Division 7 moved to patrol the Pakistan border. Mullah Sayed Mohammad became the new division commander, and the unit, along with others left in the command of militiamen, was demobilized.

Today, Sherzai is the governor of Nangrahar Province and an advisor to Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Tarnak Farms is still a concern for insurgent activity and is patrolled constantly by Coalition forces. In 2002, an unfortunate accident of fratricide occurred at the range when the pilots of two U.S. F-16s mistakenly believed a Canadian night fire exercise to be surface-to-air fire from anti-Coalition militia.

One of the pilots "rolled in self defense" and released a 500-pound bomb upon the troops, killing four and wounding eight others.

Yosuf has been living in Kandahar Province for about the last 30 years, and piloted jets in various incarnations of the Afghan Air Force. For Afghans like him, the desertion of Tarnak Farms has brought a new peace to the land.

"Today, any Afghan who steps out of his house can see, can feel, freedom," said Yosuf.

For service members like Hutchings, "the reason for the global war on terror was born at Tarnak Farms."

"When you're walking around in there taking pictures of the wreckage, you're walking in the same spots that hundreds of wannabe terrorists walked, trained and died," said Hutchings.





Army Sgt. Aaron Sanchez of A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, uses an AT-4 rocket launcher to destroy an abandoned Taliban Safehouse in Koshk Kowl, Afghanistan

Photo by Army Spc. Mike Pryor



# Air Assault

**Paratroopers from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment and their counterparts from the Afghan National Army conduct a five-day operation in Mianashin.**

**By Army Spc. Mike Pryor**  
**Task Force Red Falcon Public Affairs**

**MIANASHIN, Afghanistan** - The air-drop had fallen far from the mark in the morning. Water bottles and boxes of food were strewn for hundreds of yards across the mountains.

The paratroopers had spent the afternoon carrying box after box down from the ridgeline, but there were still several large loads that needed to be transported. With daylight rapidly disappearing, A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment seemed to have run out of options.

Luckily, that's when the "Donkey Man" showed up.

Army Spc. Daniel Boyle, an infantryman in A Company, spotted the old man as he led a team of donkeys up a hill in the distance. Boyle realized the donkeys might be the solution to A Co.'s transportation problem. He beckoned the man over and began to negotiate. They quickly reached an agreement and before long each donkey was loaded up with an enormous bundle of supplies and ready to move out.

Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Sheppard, a squad leader in A Co., mounted the lead donkey. He slung his weapon on his back and gave a gentle jab with his heels to spur the animal forward. As

the donkey started trotting off, Sheppard hollered a question to the old man.

"Hey, how do I make it stop?" he said.

But, by that time, the unlikely convoy was already on the move.

As the incident with the donkeys shows, "adapt and overcome" was the strategy on display when the A Co. paratroopers and counterparts from the Afghan National Army conducted a five-day operation in the Mianashin region north of Kandahar in early October. The operation resulted in the arrest of three Taliban leaders and the destruction of two enemy safe houses.

"On a mission like that, you never know what situation you're going to find yourself in. That's why we just try to stay flexible and make the most out of whatever breaks we get," said Army Capt. Michael Shaw, A Co.'s commander.

The operation began with a pre-dawn air assault into the town of Lwar Kowndalan Oct. 1. Two CH-47 Chinook helicopters, with an AH-64 Apache gunship for support, deposited the paratroopers in a clearing just outside the village. The paratroopers flung themselves out of the Chinooks into a wall of dirt and dust at the landing zone. The helicopters took off seconds later, and, as the dust set-

tled, the paratroopers realized they had landed in a graveyard.

The squads moved out quickly and encircled the town. Their objective was to capture several high-ranking Taliban operatives known to live in the village. With the ANA leading the way, they searched several houses and took three detainees.

They were also on the lookout for a safe-house used by Taliban forces in the area. After several hours, Shaw decided to set up a patrol base from which to continue the search. He chose a high-walled, fortress-like compound surrounded by orchards. Ironically, soon after occupying the building, the paratroopers realized it was actually the safe-house they were looking for.

The next day, after loading the three detainees onto a Chinook for transport to a secure location, the company moved out on a punishing hike through the mountains to the town of Gardench. The sun beat down mercilessly as they trudged along, sliding on the shale-covered hillsides and getting snagged in tangled thorn thickets.

The village on top of a hill at the foot of a cluster of immense boulders. A search of the homes failed to turn up any evidence of Taliban presence, but one man did inform the paratroopers that approximately 50

**See Assault, page 10**



**From Assault, page 9**

Taliban fighters had recently moved through the area. Shaw had his men set up an observation point at the old man's house in hopes that the enemy might pass by again that night.

While they waited for night to fall, another problem presented itself -- the paratroopers were almost entirely out of food and water. They would have to live off the land. They paid the old man for one of his goats and drank water from his well after purifying it with iodine tablets. Late that night, they sat around the fire eating broiled goat meat with their hands and drinking sweet tea.

"What part is this?" asked one paratrooper warily as he fished a hunk of goat meat out of the pot.

"Don't ask. Just eat," someone answered.

Later, when most of his men were in their sleeping bags or on guard, Shaw went to sit by the old man's side to thank him for the hospitality. Knowing

the Taliban would harm the old man if they knew he had helped U.S. forces, Shaw asked the man for a strange favor.

"I want you to lie to them. Don't tell them you helped us," he said.

In the morning, the company hiked several miles further out to search another compound. Then they circled back and made the journey all the way back to their base in Lwar Kowndalan to await resupply. From the roof of their compound, the paratroopers saw the C-130 fly over and crates of food and water attached to green parachutes came tumbling out of the plane's cargo hold. Sheppard's squad was dispatched to retrieve the supplies. Hours later, he rode back into the compound on the back of a donkey, leading the rest of his improvised convoy behind him.

"Cool! War donkeys!" exclaimed Army Pvt. Adam Richter, A Co. infantryman.

The resupply included civic aid supplies for the local people. All afternoon and into the evening the villagers filed

into the compound one by one to receive rice, beans, sugar, tools, radios, and other supplies. The paratroopers did their best to distribute the material according to need, but everyone seemed to be equally needy.

"Ask him how many people are in his family," 1st Lt. Sean McDonough, the company's executive officer, told his interpreter as one boy approached to receive his portion of the supplies.


"He says he has five brothers and five sisters," the interpreter said.

"Oh brother," sighed McDonough.

Operations continued the next day as the platoon discovered another abandoned safe-house and several caves that had been used as shelters or staging points for ambushes. Using mortar fire, M-136 anti-tank missiles, and hand grenades, the paratroopers destroyed them all.

A Co. was due to be extracted by Chinook helicopters just after sunrise Oct. 5. But before they could leave, there was one last piece of unfinished

**See Assault, page 11**



Army Spc. Ronald Turner of A Co., 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division searches caves near Mianashin, Afghnaistan for signs of Taliban presence.



**Army Spc. Ronald Turner provides overwatch protection from atop a hill while other members of his platoon search a village in Mianashin.**



**From Assault, page 10**

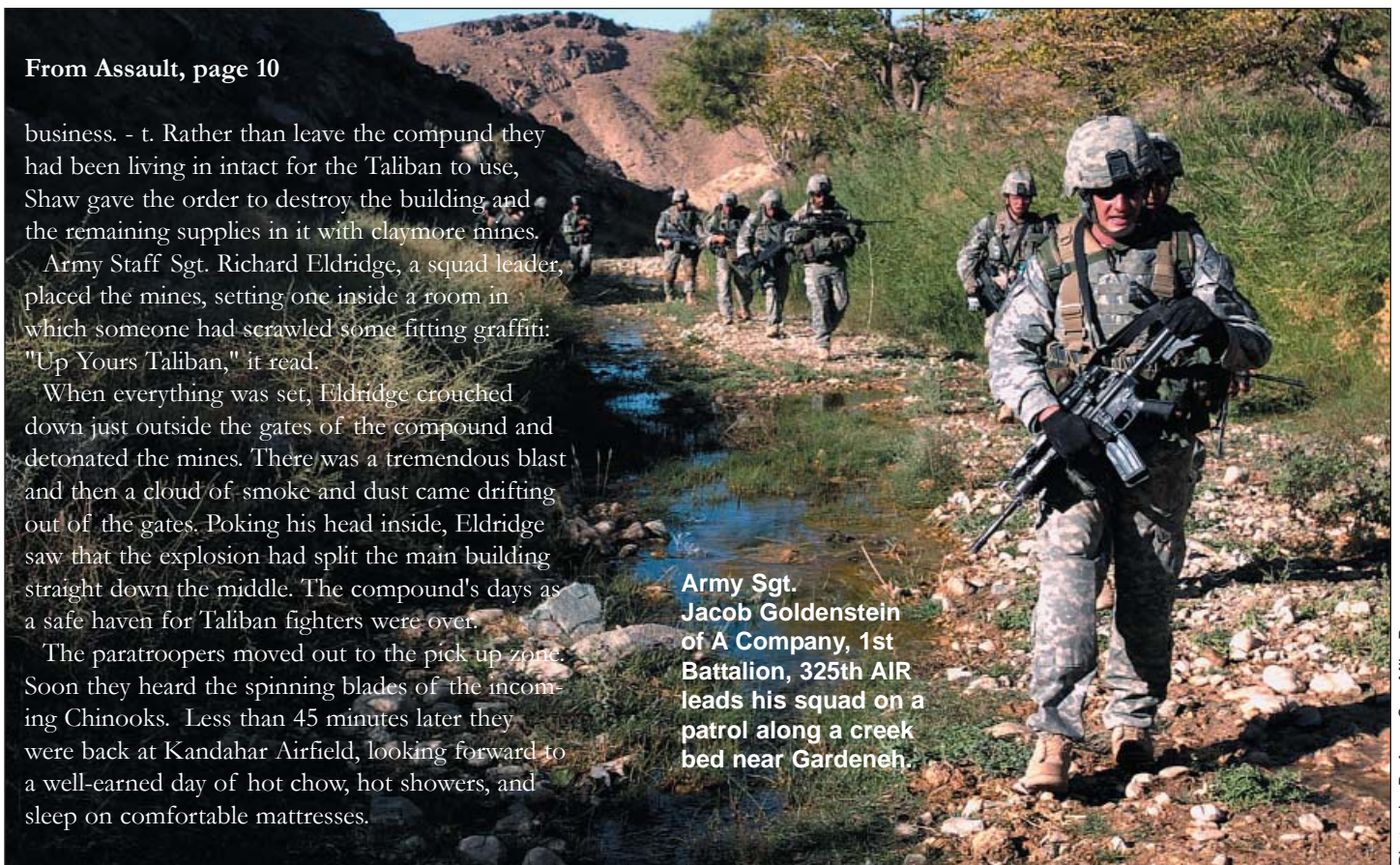
business. - t. Rather than leave the compound they had been living in intact for the Taliban to use, Shaw gave the order to destroy the building and the remaining supplies in it with claymore mines.

Army Staff Sgt. Richard Eldridge, a squad leader, placed the mines, setting one inside a room in which someone had scrawled some fitting graffiti: "Up Yours Taliban," it read.

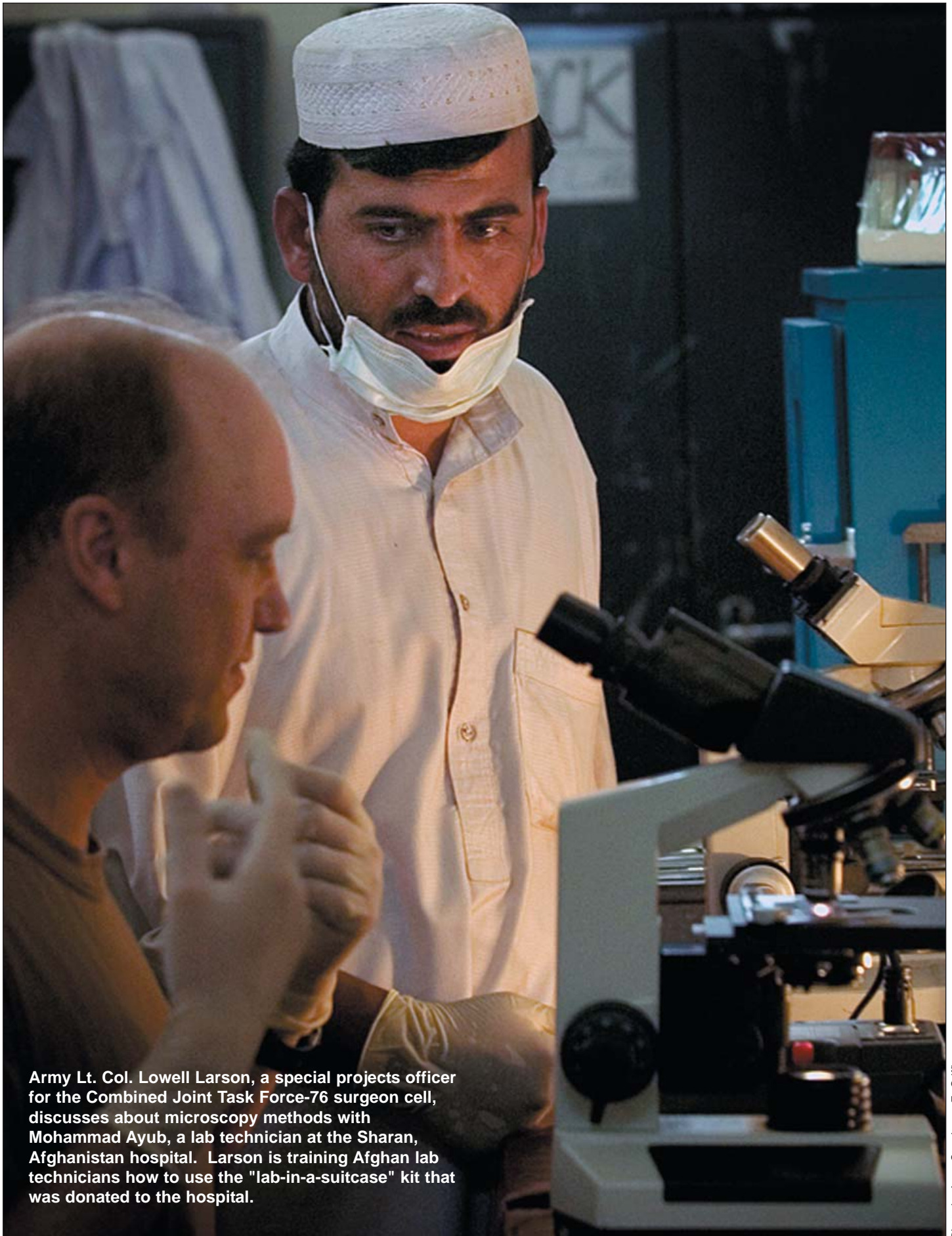
When everything was set, Eldridge crouched down just outside the gates of the compound and detonated the mines. There was a tremendous blast and then a cloud of smoke and dust came drifting out of the gates. Poking his head inside, Eldridge saw that the explosion had split the main building straight down the middle. The compound's days as a safe haven for Taliban fighters were over.

The paratroopers moved out to the pick up zone. Soon they heard the spinning blades of the incoming Chinooks. Less than 45 minutes later they were back at Kandahar Airfield, looking forward to a well-earned day of hot chow, hot showers, and sleep on comfortable mattresses.

**Army Sgt. Jacob Goldenstein of A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th AIR leads his squad on a patrol along a creek bed near Gardeneh.**







Army Lt. Col. Lowell Larson, a special projects officer for the Combined Joint Task Force-76 surgeon cell, discusses about microscopy methods with Mohammad Ayub, a lab technician at the Sharan, Afghanistan hospital. Larson is training Afghan lab technicians how to use the "lab-in-a-suitcase" kit that was donated to the hospital.



# Donation improves Sharan hospital lab

**By Army Spc. Laura E. Griffin**  
**Task Force Devil Public Affairs**

## SHARANA PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM,

**Afghanistan** - Sunshine beamed through the windows of the lab room in the Sharan Hospital. A single, antiquated microscope sat on the counter next to an old centrifuge and some bottles of dye.

Army Lt. Col. Lowell Larson, a special projects officer with the Combined Joint Task Force-76 Surgeon Cell, has set a large black box on a table in the middle of the room. Everyone was excited about the black box.

The "lab-in-a-suitcase," as the box is called, was donated to the hospital by the surgeon cell and contains a binocular microscope, a field colorimeter used for chemistry analysis, a hematocrit centrifuge used for blood analysis and a solar panel to charge the batteries.

Larson's job was to train the hospital's lab technicians to properly use the equipment.

"Without the proper training, this would be a wasted donation," said Larson. "The equipment would probably just sit and collect dust. But these technicians are very quick and eager to learn about the equipment and some new techniques. They just need the proper materials to do their jobs right."

The training took place in two phases over two days. Day one was spent at the Sharana PRT medical aid station going over blood drawing techniques and reviewing cell identification through the microscope. A fully illustrated manual came with the kit and was very helpful in bridging the language gap between the instructor and his students who spoke some English.

"This book is so helpful for us; it is a very good, very clear book," said Mohammad Ayub, one of the lab technicians being trained. "It has so many examples of what we can expect to see through the microscope that will help us diagnose things like cancer."

Day two was spent at the Sharan hospital in the lab doing step-by-step training

in hematology, chemistry and identification through the microscope using blood and urine samples from actual hospital patients.

"This is where I'm really in my element," said Larson, who is a reservist out of Germany and is a lab technician in his civilian job.

Larson's normal Army job is an air defense artillery officer, but he volunteered to help out with this work because he felt it was important for both the Afghan people and Coalition forces stationed here.

"We are helping to build up the local hospitals and make them self-sufficient," Larson said. "Getting the labs closer to modern standards is a huge step."

Army Lt. Col. Edward Michaud, the cooperative medical assistance director for the CJTF-76 Surgeon Cell, agreed.

"One of our two main missions in this country is to go around and assess the local hospitals and see what we can do to help upgrade their current equipment," said Michaud. "It's a two-way street. Our hospitals treat Afghans with medical threats to their life, limbs or eyesight. When we finish treating them, we hand them over to the local hospitals for recovery and follow-up treatments. If those hospitals cannot properly treat the patients then they have to remain in our hospitals longer, which limit the number

of beds we have to offer to new patients."

The surgeon cell's other main mission is to do medical civil assistance programs, where a team drives out to various locations and offers on-the-spot medical aid to the residents.

During the hands-on training in the lab, Larson and Ayub exchanged slide-making techniques with the samples they had.

"They do things a little differently here, and it has worked for them," said Larson. "But with this new equipment, they will be able to do more work, faster."

Ayub could not conceal his enthusiasm for the new equipment. When the training was over, he was left grinning from ear to ear.

"This new technique is very good," he said. "Before we did all the work by hand, now it is much easier; now we can investigate the patient's problems much faster. Before, it took hours and now less than an hour."

This donation was filtered through the many levels of scrutiny that all Army projects and donations go through before coming to fruition.

"The key to all projects and donations is sustainability," said Michaud, echoing a common theme heard throughout the various PRTs. "We try to work within the system by first assessing what needs to be

**See Lab, page 14**

## From Phase, page 5

Germany) to perform our phase inspections, which would greatly reduce our combat capability."

Air Force Airman 1st Class John Kern, an A-10 phase inspection technician with the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, said he enjoys his job of supporting the war fighters.

"I could not have asked for a better time than this to get my hands dirty and support the troops on the ground," said Kerr, a native of Phoenix, Ariz.

Air Force Senior Airman Emmanuel Gamboa, an A-10 armament systems specialist, said he's glad to be here during a time when national elections are bringing the people of Afghanistan one step closer to democracy.

"It's great that we're out here doing something for the world around us," said Gamboa, a native of Pacoima, Calif. "Our impact here will affect America and the rest of the world for ages to come."

The impact of the phase doc's dirty work helped blanket Afghanistan with airpower support during the country's National Assembly election process. Officials are scheduled to announce the winners Oct. 22.



# Airman receives death sentence

**By Lanorris Askew**  
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

**WARNER ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga.** -- An Airman who was recently found guilty of two specifications of premeditated murder and one specification of attempted premeditated murder has been sentenced to death by a military panel.

Senior Airman Andrew Paul Witt, 23, is now the only Airman to sit on death row.

Airman Witt's death sentence is the first Air Force death sentence since the United States vs. Jose Simoy in 1990. On appeal, the death penalty was set aside and Simoy was sentenced to life in prison.

Witt is guilty of two specifications of premeditated murder in the July 5, 2004, stabbing deaths of Air Force Senior Airman Andrew Schliepsiek and his wife, Jamie. He was also found guilty Oct. 5 of one count of attempted premeditated murder in the stabbing attack of then-Air Force Senior Airman Jason King.

By the nature of the findings, premeditated murder carries a punishment of a mandatory life sentence, but a unanimous vote by the jury sentenced Airman Witt to death, said Air Force Col. Jeff Robb, Warner Robins Air Logistics Center staff judge advocate.

Air Force Maj. Vance Spath, chief circuit trial counsel with the U.S. Air Force Eastern Judicial Circuit at Bolling Air Force Base, Washington D.C., said this was the first death penalty case he has tried, and it has been an emotional time.

"My team has been away from home for a long time," he said. "We've been working down here for the last few months exclusively, and it's a relief to be finished, a relief to go home, and it feels good to have this case finished for the Air Force."

Spath said he believes whatever the jury gave Witt would have been a just sentence, but he believes justice has definitely been served.

Witt will not be executed before the expiration of all appellate avenues, which could take years, Robb said.

"Once the trial is complete, the center commander (Maj. Gen. Michael A. Collings) will have a chance to take action on the case," he said. "After that action (which is to either approve or disapprove the sentence), the appeals process can begin."

That process begins with an automatic appeal to the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals, a military court. Appeals from there would go to the Court of Appeals for Armed Forces, which is a civilian court. Any further appeals would go to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"A review by the Supreme Court is not mandatory," the colonel said. "At the conclusion of all appeals, the president of the United States still has a pardoning power."

The sentence followed a week of testimony from family and friends of the victims who urged the all-officer panel to sentence Witt to death. Their statements were followed by pleas from the convicted Airman's family and friends to spare his life.

While the fathers of the victims described the pain they still endure over the loss of their children, the parents of Witt tried to paint a picture of their son that many have not seen.

Melanie Pehling, Witt's mother, said her son is a not an evil person and was a joy to bring up.

"We are asking for mercy because I know what's underneath," she said. "I know he has more to offer than what happened on July 5, 2004."

Terry Witt, Airman Witt's father, described him as loving and compassionate, and said his son taught him the meaning of unconditional love.

After testimony from both sides, Witt took the stand and gave an unsworn statement in which he apologized for his crime.

"To the families, to the Schliepsieks and Bielenbergs, I am so sorry from the bottom of my being," he said as he turned to face the families.

"I'm so sorry I took your son and your daughter away from you, and also, to Mr.

King, I'm so sorry for hurting you."

The Airman also submitted a written statement where he took responsibility for his actions but asked the jury to spare his life.

"I would like to apologize again to the Schliepsieks, the Bielenbergs, the Kings, my family, and the Air Force for my actions," he wrote.

"My life has changed dramatically since that night, and I plan to continue to make changes. I want you to know that I am firmly resolved to lead a productive life in the service of others and will not wander from this path if given the chance.

Please allow me to live so that I can do this. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you."

The Airman also discussed his Air Force career.

"I regret losing my focus on the Air Force mission -- looking back, I do truly love the Air Force, and I have been proud to wear the uniform," he wrote.

"I understand that my actions mean that I will never wear it again once this trial is over, and I am sorry for that as well. I am sorry for the discredit I have brought upon the Air Force and the negative attention I have brought to Robins Air Force Base."

## From Lab, page 13

done and asking certain questions like, 'Is it feasible?' and 'Who is going to do the maintenance on it?' We work with various non-governmental organizations, the local and central Afghan government, and USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) to see what the best course of action is. It is important that we work through these organizations to make sure that they can continue to build on and maintain these projects."

In this case, the "lab-in-a-suitcase" was determined to have the most immediate benefit to the hospital. The total cost of the donation was around \$3,500.

Other hospitals around the country are going through similar improvements with the help of the traveling surgeon cell.



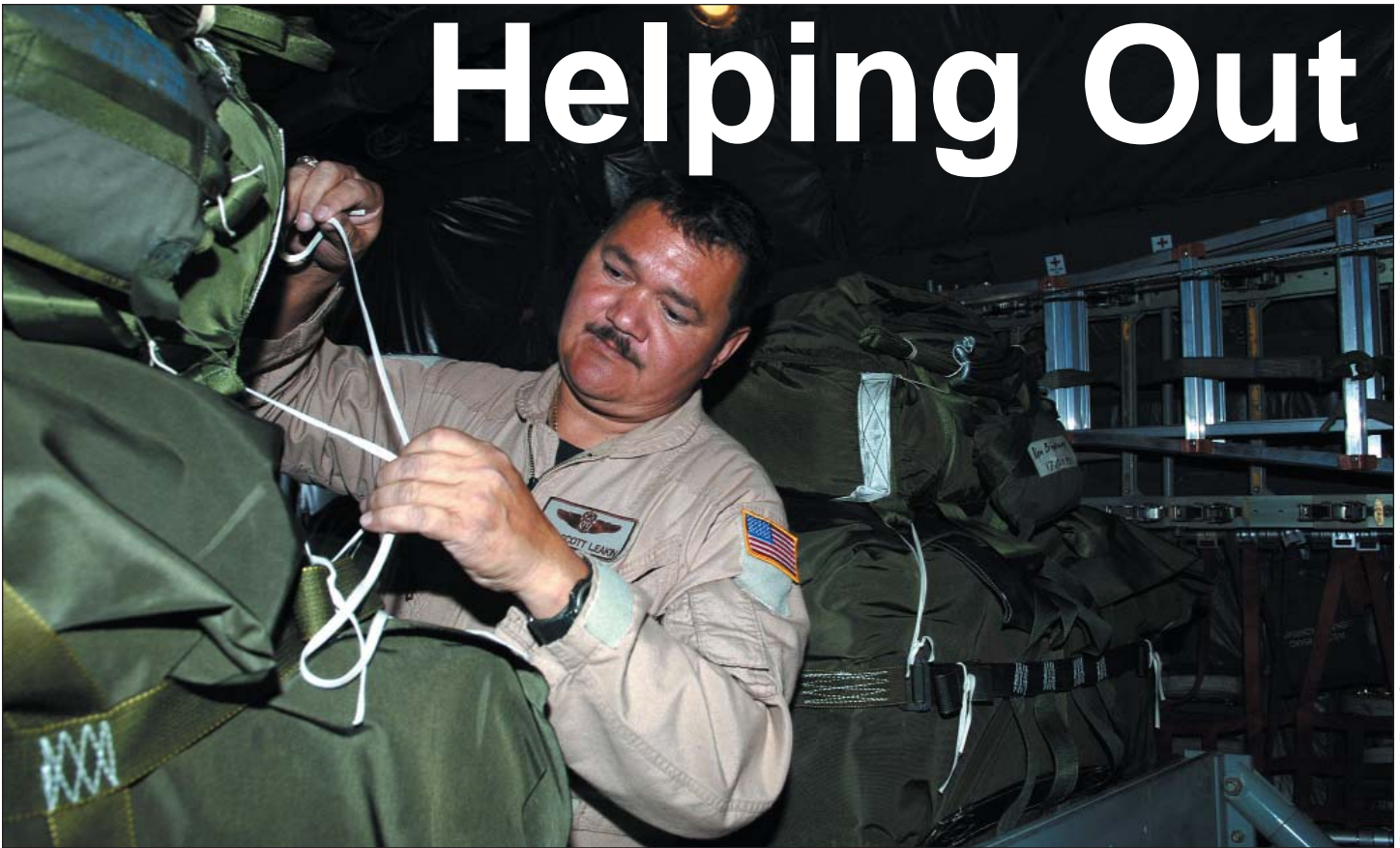


Photo by Air Force Capt. James H. Cunningham, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

Air Force Master Sgt. Scott L. Leakin, 517th Airlift Squadron loadmaster, attaches a parachute to relief supplies destined for Pakistan. The 14 pallets were the first to be air dropped into Pakistan.

After the earthquake in Pakistan on Oct. 8, Army and Air Force personnel at Bagram Airfield worked together to assemble approximately 20,000 pounds of food, blankets and supplies for the relief effort.

As of Oct. 18, more than 250,000 pounds of food, water, cots and medical supplies have been flown out of Bagram headed for Pakistan.



Photo by Air Force Capt. James H. Cunningham, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Ken Denny, 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A Pakisani soldier directs U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Bagram Airfield and Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan as they touch down on Qasim Army Airfield, Pakistan.

A C-130 from the 517th Airlift Squadron is loaded with 14 pallets of relief supplies headed for Pakistan. The flight was the first air-drop mission into the earthquake ravaged country.



*Freedom Watch*  
*October 24, 2005*

**“In war, there is no  
prize for the runner-up”**

**General Omar Bradley**

An Apache AH-64 provides protection from the air while paratroopers from A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, move into position shortly after air assaulting into Lwar Kowndalan, Afghanistan, to start a five-day mission.  
Photo by Army Spc. Mike Pryor, Task Force Red Falcon